FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"For a world united in prayer"

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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Founded by Carl Allison Evans (1880 - 1956)

OUR PURPOSE: To promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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EDITORIAL

OPENING UP AND STAYING OPEN

THE HARDEST THING for me to learn was the importance—no, the necessity—of opening up and staying open. Everything in my life, which was no different than anyone else's except in its details, seems to have conspired to fill me with a stubborn conviction that the worst shame and final disintegration of a man's life would be to let the world see what that life was like. For the sake of that world I spent the major part of my energies in the attempt to appear happy, successful, optimistic, in charge and on top of it, without a care or a qualm or even a debt. This, according to my upbringing, was only a matter of common decency, or self-respect —of, in short, that inner core of self-will and ego which is not only countenanced by but promoted by the rules of our society. Nice people, which is to say all of us egotists, did not let the truth of our lives intrude on the lives of others, who were engaged in efforts to erect and then maintain to the death similar deceptions. . . . The result of such a struggle (which it really and truly was) was an isolation from my fellow beings and myself that often terrified me. Often I felt I literally could not endure such loneliness. Nevertheless, I still refused to tell the truth. And the consequence was that I came finally to regard myself as such a monster of hypocrisy that insults and contempt began to seem all I deserved.

The day arrived when I was no longer able to tolerate such an existence. I could not go on. And it was at this point, the very bottom of my life, that I found the strength and the faith in my strengthless and faithless being to ask for help. . . to let my desperation show. . . and my misery and loneliness. I ask myself where such last-ditch capability was found, and I don't know, I wonder at it, for I have known a good many people superior to me in many ways who never found it anywhere. Wherever it came from, a willingness inculcated in me when I was a child, or (as I now believe) the constant presence of God, the act of asking worked a miracle. It was the turning-point. And what it amounted

to, actually, was my opening up to the real world built by God. It was the beginning of a new life.

People say, "Why, you are a changed man!" And that is true. But only I can see that the change is not so much a transformation but a rearrangement of the parts of the self. The change is essentially in attitude. I am conscious that to maintain that attitude I am going to have to keep myself open, I am going to have to make sure that I don't slip back into self-centeredness and self-will. The moment I do, isolation starts to creep back. . . as well as the old fears and intimations of loneliness, my former lack of trust in anything but myself. It is here that I do my most ardent praying. . . and here that I find myself accompanied and supported. —P.G.

ALLELUIA HE LIVES

Emma S. McLaughlin

The night is over;
darkness gives way
to the first rosy flush
of dawning glory.

Light swells and grows,
brushing the treetops,
probing the shadows of
the empty tomb.

Christ crucified
has triumphed over death
and walks, victorious, through
the waking garden.

Sing joy! Sing praise!
Let all the earth resound
one swelling chorus
of Alleluia.

"LOVE, YE, ONE ANOTHER"

Carla Patsuris

If only she had looked upon his faults
As hurting-evidence of need—
His melancholy heart an empty cup—
And had she eased his stumbling ways
With tenderness instead of temper-words
Ultimate repercussions now
Might echo answers a loneliest one
Needs most. . . to dwell upon

This friend, that friend, or a brother
Might leave our sweet domain
At any moment of day and night,
And may she never again forget
To measure life's extending hours
With joy, for joy is a special wisdom
Touching the heart with the urge to justify
Treasures of love, before 'a time to die.'

HYMN TO WHITE APRIL

Conrad Pendleton

Today I'm unconcerned with autumn thoughts:
with golden heaviness on apple boughs
bent to the dust in ripe humility,
or with the purple splash of plums,
mellow-gorged with hon ey of the sun,
in grasses turning white. Such thoughts
weigh down the heart and mind with harvest care.

Now is too blossomy with argument
of spring for that, and in this orchard mist

of white delight my mind's too like a tree
tiptoe with bloom and mellow with the hum
of flowery bees, and my heart, winged with joy,
too like a skylark rocketing the sky's
cathedral dome!
Content to feel but blossom mood,
I can believe this plot an Eden now
where no death is, nor change of time and shape,
so long as branches lift their mouths of warm
white dreams and breathe the soul of spring
in airy hymns of fragrance to the sun.

IN SILENT STILLNESS

Marjorie Schecher

In stillness lies the answer to
illusion, time and space.

The physical eye does see God's
manifestation in all things
omnipresent.

Sorrows and joys and eons of time
have carried my soul across this
earthly plane, seeking truth in
grand delusion.

In silent stillness there shines
the light.

In this vastness my third eye does
see God in all His omniscient
frailty, so simple the answer be;
for, "I am God and He is me."

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS *by Reuben L. Musey*

SPRINGTIME, 1975

SPRING, the awakening of life from a long winter sleep, is here once again!

A few days ago, we saw the dawn of the Easter promise, the glory of the Resurrection. On the lips of people everywhere were the age-old words: "Christ the Lord is risen...Alleluia!"

Springtime...the first robin's song...the first violet pushing through the black earth of the woods!

Each spring everything seems new. Once again, it seems there is a bit of heaven in the air. There is a smell of freshness in the gentle breeze...the sun is shining, skies are blue.

The year is repeating its old story. Our Lord has written the promise of the Resurrection in every life.

Man stoops to lift in his hands the loose soil warmed by the sun. Although he stoops, he stands tall before God, and in his hands he holds the promise of new dreams.

One can see all these things that the earth joyously presents as its offering to the mystery of life. The handiwork of God is evident everywhere.

Springtime for Fellowship in Prayer in this silver anniversary year means the vernal season.

The pathway of spring for the Fellowship is fraught with pleasantness. Each step finds some new joy unfolding. Each day of this—the twenty-fifth year—has been fruitful.

The patronage, contributions of money, time, and energy—but above all the faith of each member in supporting the silver anniversary theme, "A Look Backward...An Aim Forward..." have made springtime, 1975, a memorable one for Fellowship in Prayer.

It has been said miracles are made in heaven. Miracles happen here on earth as well.

The goal to increase the membership of the Fellowship is reaching its objective. New members are being introduced with each issue.

Letters from new members to the bi-monthly publication

and the words expressed in them are indicative of their enthusiastic reception of Fellowship in Prayer. Many have found within its pages a source of rich food for thought upon which to feed the mind and soul, a source of strength and encouragement.

The purpose of the Fellowship: "...A closer relationship to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind..." has endured for a quarter of a century because of members' loyal support. It has broadened their lives.

Springtime, 1975, then for Fellowship in Prayer, is a time to give thanks to the members, and to God for the riches He has poured into the lives of everyone.

Reuben L. Musey

LET IRELAND KNOW

Emma S. McLaughlin

I never saw the green of Erin's hills,
Sheep dotted pastures, peat bogs in the rain,
Bright colored rainbows arching hidden rills,
Nor talked with faeries on a shrouded lane.
Her chiming laughter never thrilled my ear,
Nor have I touched a blossom petaled cheek,
But out of mist her form emerges, clear—
And from the past her poets rise and speak.

So she becomes, in part, a part of me,
A traveler who journeys at my side—
The storm clouds lower, dark with mystery
And evil winds whip up a fearful tide.
O God of wind and storm, command they cease;
Let Ireland know a greening flood of peace.

ALL-EMBRACING NATURE

Virginia Ladd Otis

NATURE is many things to many people. In her breezy, flower-halls, great poets, musicians, artists, and philosophers have sought to learn the lessons she can teach. Thoreau perhaps expressed it best when he said, "True art is but the expression of our love for nature."

Of all her charms, color is most inspirational to artists.... color in the mellow glow of sunset, the varied greens of summer, the witching blue of water or violet of mountain, the colors of flowers to challenge every hue the artist can conjure from his palette. In analyzing our enjoyment of autumn, we realize that our pleasure is due mainly to its riot of color, which appeals to our senses like a work of art; for a walk in the woods of October is like wandering into the midst of a painting.

A sense of rhythm is inherent in great art...so in nature, where we find the arrangement of compound leaves and opposite leaf-veins; ferns ranked in serrated array; clouds banked like windrows in a hay-field; sand wave-rippled or traced with circles by wind-blown grasses; flying wedges of geese, fifty or more to a wedge, their wings steadily plying the air; trees drawing silhouettes in black ink against the sky at dusk; hills and valleys in symmetry; the sea in the beat of its tides, with wave following wave upon the shore.

Beyond these present things are the larger rhythms of weather cycles, the seasons, phases of the moon, alternating day and night; and over longer periods, time out of mind, the thrusting up of mountains and their wearing down by erosion, the rising of seas over the land and their departing, the reign and decay of glaciers, the waxing and waning of stars. In such affairs, nature is mysterious and inscrutable to our finite minds, bounded as we seem to be by time and space. Beyond what he can see, the artist feels a depth and mystery which fascinates.

Nature, too, is full of entrancing sounds; and some of the

great composers haunted field and forest listening for themes with the inner ear of the soul. "Afternoon of a Faun," by Debussy, is a happy piece full of the beauty of an unspoiled woodland. A harmonious tide of music, it suggests the wind in the trees, birdsong and waterfall, the shimmering of winged creatures, the calls of cuckoos, and the bounding of deer. It brings to mind mossy banks and birds flitting through shifting sun and shade.

Listening to the Second Movement of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, we recognize the murmur of a brook and the songs of nightingale, quail, and cuckoo; while the Fourth Movement portrays a thunderstorm.

Many a philosopher has found his deepest religious experience in the out-of-doors. Thoreau, though often solitary, never felt alone, but sensed a companionable presence beside him, especially when walking through his beloved woods. Emerson, the poet and friend of Thoreau, declared: "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me. I am part and parcel of God."

Sometimes we feel that the forest is God's own temple, greater than the noblest architecture wrought by man, where, raised on living pillars, the lofty ceiling opens on infinity—where flowers dress altars bearing incense wild and sweet, where the wind breathes divinest prophecies, and where the humblest creatures dwell.

Many a distraught person, harried by personal and social problems, has sought solitude in the out-of-doors, to find a spirit descending like a cool hand. At the head of a local waterfall one may find a moss-upholstered seat on the old mill foundation, brushed by hemlock boughs. Below, crystal-clear and wind-wrinkled, the brook washes over a flat edge into a little falls, and from there in to an amber pool, its shallows dancing with sun-stars. Just beyond, the brook slips under a rustic bridge and goes into its long chute-the-chute down the ledges. Here the blend of wind-whisper, bird call, and the liquid voice of water find a response in our innermost soul; for are not these the musical sounds that first penetrated the consciousness of man in the dawn of his aesthetic awakening? Wind and water

were the first lullabies of our race; and these elements offer a powerful therapy to the person goaded with hurry and worry in today's society. All anglers know that being close to the water and trees is half the fascination of fishing!

Absorbed in meditation, we have allowed the music of wind and water and the clear colors of sunlit woods to pass into our brains and permeate our souls. Walking through the forest, we have sensed a certain grandeur in the out-of-doors, where the wind blowing through hundreds of acres of woodland sounds like the roar of steady surf on some cliffy shore. On windless days the trees breathe, whisper, listen, so that one senses their aliveness and feels an afinity with them.

The naturalist John Burroughs once said that "man's happiness and his survival rests upon his living in harmony with his natural surroundings." This nature, this treasure of so great value to mankind deserves to be protected; and praying that it is not too late, we must do all in our power to preserve for our descendants these natural riches. Surely a beautiful, healthful environment is the best legacy we can hope to bestow.

Some early conservationist penned these lines so relevant today:

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood rose and left it on its stalk?
O be my friend and teach me to be thine!

***

POEM *Alice Mackenzie Swaim*

Joy is
my element;
fragrance, light, and song keep
all channels open for my heart
to soar.

A SAFE DRIVER PRAYER

(In memory of Larry Stohler)

Ruby A. Jones

Dear God, creator and preserver of all mankind,
Before I ever turn the key or touch the wheel,
Let me take inventory:
Help me to realize that I hold beneath my hands
An instrument that may bring destruction
multilation, and death.

Let me appreciate the fact that I bear responsibility
Not only for my own life,
But also for the lives of those who ride with me,
And those whom I meet on the road.
Let me *know* that I hold the power to bring
Not only misery and pain and wretchedness
But also tragedy and heartbreak to others
in ever-widening circles—
Beyond my wildest imaginings and my ability
to atone.
Give me a deepening consciousness that I must possess
A clear head, the wisdom to choose wisely
and often quickly
What is best for all concerned in moments of the
unexpected.
Take from me any desire for bravado.
Give me always the abiding sense of Thy presence
and Thy love.
And now...as I place my hands on the wheel,
May I feel Yours above them,
For unto them do I commend myself.

***

CROWNS

Sylvia Argow

Have you helped a fellow man today?
Then you have had a just reward.

Have you been anointed by the Golden Oil?
That fathoms understanding.

Have you been touched by the paragon of faith?
That stems purification.

Have you been blessed by a prayer of healing?
That is never to be lost.

Have you ever been loved by a fellow man?
That is the luxury of paradise.

Have you ever been severed from weakness?
That is to become whole.

Have you ever given reverence to the Lord?
That is to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Have you ever been dazzled by a diamond crown?
That is the Might of Righteousness.

Have you ever been obedient to the Love of Glory?
That is the apprisement of Royalty.

Have you ever placed your heart on a diadem of love?
That is to be incorruptible and free.

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EASTER JOY

Nina Willis Walter

May the Risen Christ
Be at your side
To bring you joy
At Eastertide.
May His holy peace
With you abide.

TO MOTHER

Irene A. Bradshaw

If you could step from eternity
To spend this Mother's Day with me,
I'd snip the prettiest rose for your hair
And photograph you smiling there.
An older heart, aged by maturity,
Would thank you for love and security;
Holding hands, we would sit and visit awhile,
I need travel advice for life's last mile.
You taught me the very first psalm I heard,
It was your favorite, the twenty-third;
"The Lord is my shepherd..." wait, that is the key!
Mother, you *have* bridged eternity.

A KITCHEN PRAYER

Margaret O. Richardson

While You are blessing this kitchen, Lord,
and its every busy nook,
please don't forget to bless the efforts
of this frazzled cook.

LESSON IN PATIENCE

Richard L. Browning

LAST SPRING, when all the trees were putting on their green outfits, one tree in front of our church remained an ugly barren stick. It was ten feet tall and had survived several seasons; but this year it showed little interest in going on. Our Board president echoed my thoughts that perhaps we should cut it down, as it was detracting from the beauty of the grounds.

A few nights later, in class, our minister mentioned the tree and the plans to cut it down. He pointed out that trees respond to prayer even as do men and their affairs. He also reminded us of the words on the church stationery: "The Church Dedicated to Answered Prayer." So we went out as a group and treated the tree in prayer. We showered it with love, saw it as a perfect expression of God-Life, patted its trunk, and gave it a whale of a pep talk. Some of us repeated our prayers from time to time.

A month went by and there stood our ugly tree still bare and lifeless; apparently in open defiance of our efforts. I told the minister that the tree wasn't responding to some of the finest prayers this side of anywhere. It was an eyesore and really should be removed. He consented reluctantly.

One Saturday morning I dug an inch or so below the ground and chopped it down. It was only after it was lying on the ground that I noticed a few tiny green leaves pushing their way out of the juncture of two dead-looking twigs. There were buds in other places, and in another week the tree would have had many leaves; but I had lost my patience and chopped it down!

I told the story to the congregation the following Sunday. Holding up the branches with the sprig of green for all to see, I called it "Browning's Folly." How slow we are to understand the power of prayer. How quickly we lose patience before our demonstration is made manifest at the perfect time.

* * * *

INSPIRATION

Max S. Barker

Bright
jigsaw
bits of light,
stained glass window
Christ.

BEAUTEOUS LAND

Ann D. Franklin

Just think how drab the earth would be
Without the flower and the tree,
Devoid of mountain and the sea,
And the river flowing free.
But blessed were we by that Hand,
That wisely planned this beauteous land.

WHAT TO DO?

Jean Moore Smith

Father of us all,
If my plans are wrong,
Put blocks in their way.
Make them fail, I pray.

Kind Guide, Still Small Voice,
If they could be right,
Let me have a sign
They are your design.

UNSEEN DISCIPLES

Cornelia Bagarotti

THE WORKING of God is mysterious. He in whose heart God is an ever-present reality will be led to do the will of God. He will bring strength and healing and aid to that one whom God has chosen as His child in need.

The unspoken prayer of need ascending to the Father is heard by Him and met in all entirety by that one whose inner ear and heart are open to His guidance and prompting.

So simple is the working of prayer....

To the One who created all life no problems exist. He has but to look with love upon one of His children and all those who are His own will care for them.

He who prays steps out of the realm of Man into the realm of God; thus placing himself in that Kingdom of Heaven where perfect love casteth out all fear.

How beautiful are these promises. "Ask and ye shall rereceive." "Seek and ye shall find." "My Peace I give unto you."

We are the unseen disciples living in His light and bearing His love to a world in which all face constant trials and testing. Never let any person or anything deflect you from the faith you hold in good or alter your capacity to understand, to forgive, and to continue to love. It is not what happens to a man that counts but rather his capacity to stand up under life's blows and to continue to radiate Eternal Life.

So long as we are in this world, we are the custodians of the Spirit. Ours is the task of carrying out that which has been entrusted to us by the One who created all life. Go therefore into the world armed with the shining armor of love. Pray for your fellow man and pray for yourself that in you the voice of God may be heard, that through your touch healing and comfort may come, that through your lips inspiration and joy may flow, that all living and sentient things may look to you with benison. Be that perfect channel you were intended to be so that, as in the words of the Lord's Prayer, "His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

TERRIBLE?

Samuel M. Silver

IT'S a terrible day today. It's raining."

I heard someone characterize the weather in that way not so long ago.

It was raining. . . so the day was terrible.

Ah, how fragmentary is our vision and how often our outlook is selfish.

Does rain make a day terrible?

Without the rain, would the earth be nourished? If the earth were not bathed every so often, where would our food come from? The next time it rains, forget yourself. Imagine yourself to be a farmer who looks with anxiety on every day which means the parching of his soil. His Soil? Our soil. God's soil, the repository of the food we eat, the source of our energy and our health.

Practice unselfishness. The next time it rains, forget your own immediate discomfort and see that phenomenon of nature in its grander scope. Or echo the words of the poet William Stidger, who once sang:

I saw God wash the world last night
With His sweet showers on high,
And then when morning came
I saw Him hang it out to dry.

He washed each tiny blade of grass
And every trembling tree,
He flung His showers against the hill,
And swept the billowing sea.

The white rose is a cleaner white,
The red rose is more red,
Since God washed every fragrant face,
And put them all to bed.

There's not a bird,
There's not a bee that wings along the way,
But is a cleaner bird and bee than it was yesterday.
I saw God wash the world last night,
Ah, would He had washed me
As clean of all my dust and dirt as that old white birch tree.

What a wonderful day it is when we are favored with the blessing of rain. May we always appreciate the glories of nature, reflecting the wisdom of Almighty God.

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THE FRUITS OF TIME

Francis O. Raniville

There is a seed within the heart, a flower,
A test of mankind's pateince to endure,
A steadfast faith in God to rest secure,
That blossoms forth with beauty in its hour.
Somehow humanity has lost this power,
No longer has the will to lose and own,
Or die to self and live for those alone
Who truly need new strength in life's dark hour;
If we would give our all without complaint,
Life would be simplified—not in vain;
Each thing man counted loss would be a gain:
Eternity rewards the faithful saint—
For he who lives the inner life of love
Can comprehend the things from God above.

FOUR POEMS

Winifred Hamrick Farrar

1/ Wave-Like Sound

The clapping of a single hand
Is muffled beating, wave-like sound,
Caressing movement lapping round
Some loved object on lone sea sand...

A soft motion upon the strand
Bathing lost jewel on the ground:
The clapping of a single hand
Is muffled beating, wave-like sound.

Not even breeze that could be fanned
From raging sea, savage pound,
Could be the touch that would astound
A lonesome heart in foreign land...
The clapping of a single hand.

2/ As Thistledown

Forget
Completely now
Your yesterdays... to be
As light as thistledown—
Upon the air
As free.

Blow through
The living time
As flowers willingly
Giving themselves away—
Upon the air
As free.

3/ Home Is God

Our beings find bliss forever;
Souls made worthy, God shall give rest
In the center of home in the high land
When we rise from our graces at the last day's blast.
We shall have peace in music and light,
Although we were dead in the flesh,
As the grass of the field when it withers, rots.
Although we touch earth, home is God;
Our beings find bliss forever.

4/ Erupting Sparks

Love fires
The earth's deep heart—
Erupting sparks to flame,
To radiate the universe,
All space.

HUMILITY

Mildred Long

Come in the glory of the early morning
And stand at the steps of self-surrender.
Drop every burden, unloose every weight.
Unclasp the garment of self.
Loosen your hold on every clinging sorrow,
every hurt.

Put on the garment of Light
And begin to climb the steps — one by one —
Ascending to the sanctuary of Love.
Leave all behind.
Relinquish every cherished hope.
Climb with upward gaze and look
Unashamed upon the face of Love.
Clothed in Light, healed by Love,
You know the meaning of humility.

PLAYING TAG

R.D. MacKenzie

A friend came up as I walked in the garden,
Oh Friend, he spoke, how come you are here?
I turned — Is it in your soul to ask me why
The birds fly? A butterfly plays tag there;
Ask him why I play! Present games become air,
Anticipating a new breath. You are the sigh
It will touch to win this game. Give a tear
For butterfly and me and go home free: Your
Self.

YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE

Nixeon Civille Handy

TRUTH is not often found whole in one person or all of one piece in any one place. But rather gleaned from a dropped feather pointing there, or a branch leaning toward that certain gate; a window partly lighted across the way, a stone overturned, a crumb in an unknown forest: any one of these may carry truth.

A scattered petal on the quiet lake floats toward us and away to a glen of no noise; a star fixed, or falling, reveals a truth unexpectedly. A facet of a swinging prism swung by an uneducated person, or inexperienced, may set off a prayer heard round the world. An angle of light in a dark place may cause lightning to strike. The youngest one with the smallest talent might be holding the key to the greatest enigma.

In eternity all of the parts fit together. And each person bearing a portion of truth must be willing to subject that portion to the scrutiny of the testing time. These small but significant opinions and beliefs must be held up to the telescope, the microscope; must be tested for the greatest good for the most. The essence settles in the comparison—and discussion. In this kind of sharing, many learn parts of truth they did not even dream existed.

Feel the call of truth within. Feel it call from one another. No one has a corner on the true. And no one will see the truth whole until he see the Father. He alone is the Whole Truth.

DAWN *Jewell Kirby Fitzbugh*

The clear call of a bird filling the air,
The hush of a Presence lingering there,
A call to my heart from the heart of the Lord,
A response from my soul as I think on His Word.

HE IS ALWAYS NEAR

Hettie Barker

WHILE on a trip to London recently, I became ill and was confined to my hotel room. During this time I did a lot of meditating about how our best-laid plans can go astray.

My husband and I had programmed this trip perfectly--passport, health record, proper clothes, accessories. We felt everything was in excellent order. I, however, was advised by the London doctor to go home.

During my stay in London, which lasted only several days, my Bible was the source of my strength. Being so many miles from home, I was afraid, and my prayer was "God, give me the strength to get back home." The following verse was like an encouraging arm around my shoulder: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

All through life, we are continually learning the mysteries of God. This incident taught me about God's ever-listening ear. It taught me the power of prayer. It brought to light the considerate people around me and how we all need help but are never really alone. It is a wonderful feeling to know our Maker is always near. . . . So if you feel alone when you're sick, or if you are depressed and need your burdens lightened, turn to God. He is on twenty-four-hour duty, waiting and wanting to help you. I know. I talk with Him daily or in the middle of a sleepless night. He is always near.

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THE CONCLUSION

Estelle D. Broadrick

WHAT am I doing here, and how did I arrive at this place? What I am doing is obvious. I am asking myself questions. How I arrived is a little more difficult to answer. I came here by various trails, winding roads, cowpaths and bramblebrier patches. I arrived partly by plan, and mostly by accident, by conditions and circumstances beyond my control. I arrived by faith!

Sometimes I ran joyfully and gladly, and sometimes, I stumbled. I walked and I plodded, and there were times when I literally crawled. . . .

I walked with a song on my lips and joy in my heart, and I walked with tears streaming down my face and my throat aching with sobs. Twice for me, life seemed to stand still. . . . Twice I felt defeated and lost and alone. I felt I had reached the world's end—and one more step would plunge me into utter darkness and I would be conscious only of falling, of falling through space.

When the skies were black, and there was no light upon my pathway, I held to the thought of Jesus, and polished a little star of faith and hope that remained in my heart. Aware that this was the only light in the world for me, I held onto that star—and walked by faith.

This was not easy, for, as all mortals do, I felt a need and an urge to touch, to see my security. A miser may count and hold the gold he collects, a mother may hold and be comforted by her children, but faith you must never let go. Never let a doubt into your mind, or faith may sail off like a stringless balloon forever out of reach. I had nothing to hold in my hands, but my mind and heart were fixed on God. . . and the star shone brighter and bigger as time went on. There were nights when sleep was a million miles away. I spent the hours in prayer, and this was far more important than sleep.

This was my serenity and my sanity. This was my security. The miser's gold may be stolen or lost, a house may burn, a partner may decide to sell out, a husband or wife may leave you, a

child may desert you, or even parents may let you down, friends may become indifferent. . . . Where then is safety?

There is only one who never fails, only one who remains the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Only one who knows you better than you know yourself and therefore knows what is best for you. There is only One you can trust completely—and eternally.

***

The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.
—Daniel 11: 32

PRELUDE TO PRAYER

Nora M. Newman

When the Master plays the prelude
of our lives' melodies each day,
We are wrapped in sweetest music
and we hear the Teacher say:
"I can move your mountains,
I can fill your life with power
As we fellowship together
each minute of every hour."

We will open wide the windows of our souls
nor will we mind
If other lives are different
for His perfect will we'd find.
We in Christ and Christ in God,
we have that peace most rare,
By faith in His unchanging grace
we will walk in prayer.

RENEWAL

Rose Noller

Sometimes on earth we need consistency;
Illusive reasoning is cruel and blind,
Where words are plausible — an endless sea,
With Truth and Love left in a slough behind.
This is a day: Magnolias blossoming,
And scarlet tulips, gold and cream, mile-long;
A million daffodils each pregnant Spring
Where every curve corrects an unheard wrong.
Sometimes on earth we need consistency,
Some hint of heaven on our human way,
Where natural care points over-whelmingly:
"This is a place where one ought to stay."
There are no words when earth is beauty-shorn;
There are no words when beauty is reborn!

LEAVES OF LIFE

Pearl H. Counts

The leaves of life are blowing swiftly
Into a swirling sea—
Awaiting everlasting judgment
Pre-ordained for you and me.

The angry waves are rolling—roaring—
Engulfing every stride. . .
Tempestuous winds are lifting—blowing—
Our leaves with ever rising tide.

The bygone days have varied memories;
Wisdom gained at freedom's cost.

Now—leaves of life are slowly fading
Into a realm that's never lost!

As eventide of life approaches,
Leaves will harken heaven's call. . .
The silken veil will soon be parting,
Revealing home, for one and all.

AN EASTER FOR MAN

Ella Castle Nedrow

He arose that glorious morning
And smiled on a doubting world;
He held our only salvation,
The Banner of Life, unfurled.

The Way of the Cross, so cruel,
And then, up from the grave,
Our Lord, quite humbly, went the route,
Unworthy man to save.

Easter holds each man in awe. . .
Its meaning is so deep;
Reminding us of woeful lack,
And causing us to weep.

Out of our deep contrition comes
The promise of life with Him;
An Easter Day for all the world,
A light which shall not dim.

MEDITATION:

IS IT ALWAYS BENEFICIAL?

Some Positive and Some Negative Views

Gopi Krishna

THE PRESENT WAVE of interest in higher states of consciousness and in the exploration of the inner world, now sweeping over America and Europe, has a deeper reason behind it than is usually understood by those engaged in the study of the human mind. This is not just a passing phase, a shifting of human interest from the material to the spiritual for a change, or just a vagary of the mind. It is based on the pressure of certain psychophysiological changes in the human nervous system and the brain to mark the point where consciousness finds itself in a position to turn its search on itself in order to unravel its own mystery.

The same phenomenon almost invariably occurred when a people in the past attained to a certain level of civilization and —for the well-to-do classes at least—material amenities and leisure provided the occasion for this inner exploration. It happened in Sumer, Egypt, India, China, Greece, and other places. The record of what their research revealed, at least in part, still exists.

The recrudescence of the same thirst in this age of reason is attended with problems which were not present before, however. It has to contend now with the dominating intellect and to convince it that this recrudescence is based on a pressing need of the human psyche and is not a mere chance intruder with which one could deal arbitrarily as one liked.

During this period of conflict—between this growing thirst for spiritual experience and the still-skeptical ranks of rationalists—a certain amount of confusion is inevitable. There are many intellectuals who believe that the states of illumination which many thousands of people are seeking are but the inner mental states bordering on the subconscious. They hold that these states can be evoked in hypnosis or during the Alpha and Theta phasse

of biofeedback. "A yogi can learn to control his brain waves in a matter of years," say Karlins and Andrews in *Biofeedback*, adding that "The average person using biofeedback training can learn to control his brain waves in a matter of hours."

They quote Dr. Johann Stoyva as saying that information feedback techniques might be able to teach the "blank mind" state, typical of Zen and Yoga, within "months or even weeks." Stoyva's own experience of Alpha, they say, "was like a flowing gray-black film with a luminous quality." At another place: "As the technology for measuring and training brain waves becomes more sophisticated, unpracticed meditators will have the opportunity to duplicate the physiological states of Zen and Yoga."

This is a misconception. The gravity of the error lies not in misjudging the nature of mystical ecstasy and the phenonemon of illumination, closely associated with it, but in completely overlooking a factor which is of paramount importance for human welfare and safety. This is the factor of evolution or, in other words, of the resistless change in human consciousness, caused by an equally resistless, though still imperceptible, microbiological change in the human brain.

We see unchallengeable evidence for this transformation when we compare the relics of ancient cultures, three to five thousand years old, with the culture of today. But as a class, biologists are not prepared to concede that the human brain is still in a process of organic evolution, for they see no perceptible symptoms of it. True, there are no discernible signs in the brain to attest to this transformation. But then: are we able to decipher the cryptic language of the cranium and is it not still almost a complete mystery to us?

Until very recently we could not even find any visible organic signs of such a glaring pathological upheaval as that of insanity, and even eminent psychologists believed it to be purely psychic in nature. Even now the biological origin of insanity is completely obscure. On what evidence then do the erudite pass their judgments?

The very first experience of the beatific state brings the

realization home to one who has it that the nature of consciousness varies with different individuals. The difference between a blockhead and an intellectual is a difference in the depth and volume of consciousness. Each point of awareness, representing a human being, has its own spectrum, its own brightness, depth and volume, and in this way each varies from the other. The consciousness of the enlightened person is virtually illuminated and he or she lives--both in the waking and dreaming states—in a resplendent world of light.

Consciousness is a sovereign reality of the universe. Its range of manifestations is infinite. Just as there are subhuman states of consciousness so there are trans-human states also. Mystical consciousness or enlightened awareness marks the lowest limit of the trans-human variety. There have been historical personages who had it either occasionally or as a perennial possession from birth.

We see this state of illumination gradually increasing when we rise from the lowest to the highest stratas of the human mind, both conscious and unconscious. The tragedy is that every individual is enclosed in a water-tight shell of his own mind and is entirely debarred from having even one fleeting glimpse of that of another. This strict isolation makes each individual invest others with the same kind of consciousness he himself has, with more or less intelligence or this trait or that. This is a fallacy.

There is a difference in the very structure or spectrum of each individual consciousness caused by the difference in the biological organism through which it is expressed. The very texture of illumined consciousness is thus distinct and different from others. It is not only that one has visual feasts of light and color or an extended awareness, but there must occur a wholesale transformation of consciousness to its deepest depths.

During the course of a genuine mystical experience a higher dimension of consciousness intervenes, eclipsing the normal individuality partially or wholly for a certain period. It then seems as if a new world, a new order of existence or a superhuman being has descended into view. There is an unmistakably enhanced

perception of lights, colors, beauty, goodness, virtue, and harmony which lend a super-worldly appearance to the whole experience.

Do we not see this greater appreciation of light, color, beauty, harmony, ideals, moral values and creative joy in the great geniuses of mankind, the painters, sculptors, musicians, writers, philosophers, poets, mystics, and reformers of both the past and present?

Transcendental consciousness, adorned with all these attributes, is but a step ahead and must be clearly understood as such to chart out the direction which the evolution of consciousness is taking before our very eyes. If it is possible to produce geniuses of all these categories, with guided meditation, biofeedback, drugs, hynosis, letting the mind go or other practices of that sort, then enlightenment cannot fail to respond to the same treatment to produce Christs, Buddhas, or Platos in lavish numbers in the years to come. If not, then why all this confusion?

Biofeedback and Mystical Experience

BIOFEEDBACK EQUIPMENT is designed to identify certain phases of consciousness. The technique has come into use because some of the scientists who are experimenting on consciousness are under the impression that the Alpha and Theta states provide the matrix from which mystical experience and creative talent are born. It also provides an avenue for the cure of mental and even bodily ailments and for acquiring greater mastery over the mind.

By means of a signal, which can take the form of light or sound, biofeedback provides an index for identifying different stages of consciousness, namely, 1) alert wakefulness, 2) stilled, passive, relaxed or vacant states, 3) the somnolent states preceding sleep, and 4) deep sleep. They are designated Beta, Alpha, Theta, and Delta respectively. Alpha and Theta are slower-paced waves and are associated with inward attention, problem-solving, creativity, etc.

In order to point out the error involved in this supposition it is necessary first of all to differentiate between the Alpha and Theta states and the state of concentrated attention that precedes the mystical ecstasy. According to the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali—and every other time-honored manual of yoga—the mind has to pass through two stages of concentration, named dharana and dhyana; i.e., a primary state of consciousness and a more stabilized and prolonged form of it. Only then can it attain to Samadhi or the mystical trance. There are detailed directions in all yoga treatises on how this state of unbroken fixity of attention can be achieved. The target to be attained is that the observing mind and the object contemplated should fuse into one. This can occur in only two ways: Either the object dissolves into consciousness and only the seer remains intensely conscious of himself, or he loses his own identity and becomes one with the object on which the mind is fixed.

In fact, the rigorous forms of Pranayama, Mudras, and Bhandas, peculiar to Hatha yoga, are all aimed to enhance the effect of concentration on the brain and nervous system even further in order to accelerate the awakening of the Serpent Power. With gradual practice, the mind is trained to fall into deeply absorbed conditions which, in Samadhi, attain a depth that makes the seer oblivious to his surroundings though far more intensely aware within.

The aim of the practices is to keep only one object or one line of thought before the mind to the exclusion of every other object or chain of ideas. In order to achieve one-pointedness of the mind, a great deal of voluntary effort is necessary, and the practitioner has to keep himself always in a state of alertness to prevent his mind from slipping into passive or drowsy states or into other streams of thought and fancy. It is clear, therefore, that there is a world of difference between a passive, inwardly-focussed mental condition—where the ideas are allowed to meander and drift, as is the case in the state preceding sleep—and the alert, attentive, centrally-focussed state of mind necessary for concentration in all its forms.

This is clearly brought out in the Bhagavad Gita. In verse

25 of the sixth discourse, for instance: "Little by little let him gain tranquility by means of reason, controlled by steadiness. Having made the mind abide in Self, let him not think anything . . . As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goeth forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the self."

This point is further elucidated by Krishna in reply to the query of Arjuna, in which the latter points out that the mind is extremely restless and as hard to curb as the wind. "Without a doubt," says Krishna, "the mind is hard to curb, but it may be curbed by constant practice and by dispassion."

The cultivation of a one-pointed mind, as a prelude to attaining God-consciousness, is also repeatedly emphasized in the Upanishads. "Taking hold of the bow," says the Mundaka Upanishad, "one should fix on it an arrow, sharpened with meditation, drawing the string with a mind absorbed in the thought of that very target which is the Immutable."

The citations can be multiplied indefinitely to show that the practice of meditation, undertaken in all yoga disciplines, has to be active in nature and that the mind has to be kept fully alert, focused only on one thought or image. The discipline is to be continued till the mind becomes habituated to concentrated application on one image or subject for prolonged periods. It is a well-known fact that this state of one-pointed attention and absorption is better developed in the highly intelligent and talented mind and is a prominent characteristic of every form of genius. On the other hand, the vacant, idiotic and insane minds lack the power to focus attention intelligently on any subject for a sizable duration of time.

The irony is that some teachers of yoga and other meditational techniques in America and Europe, by their own admissions and demonstrations, confirm this entirely erroneous view of scholars and scientists, particularly in the United States. Those of them who declare certain kinds of Asanas or a certain amount of control over their respiration, heart action, and other metabolic processes to be yoga or, in other words, the summum bonum of this time-honored discipline, fall into the very trap by which many western

scholars are gripped.

There are others who prescribe negative forms of concentration, forbidden by the ancient masters, which allow the mind to think loosely or wander ceaselessly during meditation, leading to passive, somnolent or quiescent states indicated by the Alpha signal in biofeedback. They say that the visionary experiences or the creative flashes that sometimes occur in this state, as they do sometimes in dreams also, are the landmarks of genuine mystical experience.

It is not, therefore, to be wondered that western scientists, misled by these annunciations of professional yoga teachers, equate the transcendental state of mystical ecstasy with self-induced day-dreaming, vacant or passive states of mind. In this assessment they fail to take notice of the fact that in all descriptions of mysical ecstasy there are certain very prominent and unmistakable symptoms that are not encountered in the Alpha or Theta states. These are 1) vivid sensations of light both within and without, 2) a feeling of extreme rapture which is reflected in the whole appearance of the individual, 3) often streaming tears at the majestic and sublime nature of the spectacle, 4) a sense of intimacy with or proximity to an Infinite Presence or Celestial Being, 5) contact with an infinite fount of knowledge, 6) horripilation, 7) a sense of unbounded wonder and awe at the surpassing vision and 8) intellectual illumination with Jnana, i.e., perennial wisdom.

During the period the ecstasy lasts, the awareness is highly intensified and enlarged. The individual becomes more fully conscious within than he ever was before, and the impact of the experience is often so powerful that even one single excursion into this ineffable territory remains indelibly imprinted on the memory to serve as a landmark through the rest of life.

It is the memory of a glorious trans-human or other-worldly experience which is lived intensely for a brief duration—beyond the least shadow of a doubt—and not of a dream-like or visionary human state, however realistic and vivid it might have seemed at the time. The genuine mystical experience deals a shattering blow to the ego and melts down the walls that segregate the indi-

vidual from the rest of his fellow beings.

The narcissistic and phoney forms of yoga or other disciplines, on the contrary, inflate the ego and isolate even more completely the individual from the resplendent One in All. This is the reason why the truly illuminated are humble, unpretentious and child-like in their behaviour, indifferent to worldly greatness and fame. While, on the contrary, unenlightened professional spiritual teachers are often self-centered, dominating and ostentatious, eager for a following and the adulation of crowds. In one breathless moment of inner illumination, wrought by the successful practice of yoga, the whole personality of a man can undergo a radical change for life. "He who is happy within, who rejoiceth within, who is illuminated within," says the Bhagavad Gita, "that yogi, becoming the Eternal, goeth to the Peace of the Eternal."

In raising these issues there is no intention to cast any doubt about the therapeutic value of biofeedback training or of hypnosis or of those systems of yoga and methods of mind-culture which prescribe passive, empty or fluidic states of mind for the practice of meditation. There is also no question raised about their capacity to bestow calm and relaxed states of mind or even to induce visionary or extra-sensory states with weird features and colors, like the ones described by the scientists engaged in this investigation. But this weird or exotic imagery, color, shape, or feature—unattended by other symptoms—is not mystical experience at all. We sometimes have the same experiences even in dreams or with drugs, and they do not signify the beatific state nor a contact with Cosmic Consciousness. When once this fact is clearly grasped then only can there be any hope of a well-directed investigation into the still little-understood mystical ecstasy and other allied phenomena.

(To be continued)

***

NOTICES & COMMENTS

PRESIDENT TO PRESIDENT. The following letter, dated January 8, 1975, was sent from The White House to Fellowship in Prayer President Reuben L. Musey: "Dear Mr. Musey: Thank you sincerely for your prayers as I carry out my duties as President of the United States. Having the support and encouragement of fine people like you and all associated with the Fellowship in Prayer is both heartwarming and gratifying to me. I want you to know how much I appreciate your kindness to me, and I hope that you will keep me in your thoughts and prayers in the days ahead. Sincerely, Gerald R. Ford."

GENEROUS GIFT. We are grateful to Mrs. Mildred Seydell, Southern Zone Advisor who is recovering from illness, for her annual gift of subscriptions for the libraries of colleges and universities.

NEW BOOKS. The Fellowship library has welcomed the following additions: *The Searching Wind* (Warner Press, Anderson, Ind.), anecdotes, poems, and personal experiences by FIP contributor Ruby A. Jones; *The Son Replies* (Alphabet Printers, Hemet, Cal.), sequel to "The Father Speaks" by Advisor Florence De Groat; *Hinduism In A Nutshell* by K. Ramachandra; and *Quiet Now, My Soul* by Donald J. Wareham and *Truth Speaks* by Richard E. Tottress (both published by Exposition Press, Hicksville, N.Y. 11801).

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We are sincerely grateful to those readers who have renewed, and are renewing their subscriptions. Those who have not yet done so are invited to renew as soon as possible. Ours is a nonprofit fellowship and only through the help and cooperation of those who are interested in our work can FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER be improved and extended throughout the world.

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER. The bimonthly publication is published six times a year (February, April, June, August, October, and December) at the rate of fifty cents per copy (thirty-five cents for a back copy); three dollars per year—four dollars overseas. Special rates available for copies in quantity.

"I BELIEVE"

Laura Innis

You ask me, why do I believe?
I cannot explain in words of an intellectual
Nor in the fine phrases of theology.
For my faith is a simple thing
A yearning for something more than struggling through
From day to tedious day.
Then I met the One who understood my heavy heart and disconte
"Who is this one?" you ask.
It is He who plumbed my very depths.
It is He who gave me strength and lured me on
To set my goals and start anew from day to day.
It is He who gave me a new spirit to shed the garment of the old
And in time, cast that aside for yet a finer one.
And on and on from character to character.
Until at last my daily path is full of joy and peace.
I ask you, "How can I not believe?"